National Nuclear Security Administration
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NEWS

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The United States and the United Kingdom Cooperate on Ridding Russia of Weapons Grade Plutonium

LONDON – The United States National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the United Kingdom's Trade and Industry Ministry today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to assist the permanent shutdown of the final operating weapons grade plutonium production reactor in the closed nuclear city of Zheleznogorsk, Russia.

Under this MOU the United Kingdom will contribute $20M to NNSA's Elimination of Weapons Grade Plutonium Production Program (EWGPP).

NNSA Assistant Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation James Turner signed the MOU with the United Kingdom's Minister of Trade and Industry Nigel Griffiths. The governments of the United Kingdom and the United States are supporting the shutdown of the Zheleznogorsk plutonium production reactor as part of their commitment to the G8 Global Partnership.

"The signing of this MOU is a major step in our collaborative efforts to address our mutual nonproliferation objectives," said NNSA Administrator Linton F. Brooks. "When the Zheleznogorsk reactor is finally shut down, there will be one less source of nuclear weapons grade plutonium in the world."

The EWGPP will result in the permanent shutdown of three Russian nuclear reactors, which currently produce weapons-grade plutonium. These reactors, which are the last three reactors in Russia that produce plutonium that could be used for military purposes, also provide necessary heat and electricity to two regions in Siberia. In order to meet these energy requirements, the EWGPP will provide support to the Russian Federation for provision of replacement fossil energy plants. The Russians have agreed to permanently shut down the reactors once replacement energy is provided.

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear energy. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, reliability and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear testing; works to reduce global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad.

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